

Transcript of Interview with Paula Ferradas Hiraoka by Brissa Campos Toscano

Interviewee: Paula Ferradas Hiraoka

Interviewer: Brissa Campos Toscano

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Location (Interviewee): St. Mary's University

Location (Interviewer): St. Mary's University

Transcriber: Lily Crigler

Abstract:

Paula Ferradas Hiraoka is an international student from Peru at St. Mary's University majoring in International and Global Studies. Paula is interviewed by Brissa Campos Toscano about her experience as an international student. They discuss the process that Paula completed in order to take part in the International Students Program while mentioning the resources St. Mary's University has given her in order to support her while also bringing up possible ways for this program to improve.

Brissa Campos Toscano 00:00

So the following interview was conducted with Paula Ferradas for international student oral history project. It took place on November 22, 2021 at St. Mary's University. The interviewer is Brissa Campos Toscano. So Paula, thank you for being here. Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

Paula Ferradas Hiraoka 00:19

Sure. Thank you for inviting me, Brissa. So well, my name, as you mentioned, is Paula Ferradas Hiraoka. I'm a freshman at St. Mary's University. And actually, my major is International and Global Studies, mostly known here as IGS.

Brissa Campos Toscano 00:37

Okay, so the first question is, I would like to know about how do you apply for St. Mary's, so tell me your experience being admitted to St. Mary's University?

Paula Ferradas Hiraoka 00:48

Sure. So actually, the previous school I was with a Marianist school in Peru, and well, that school has a partnership with the University, so the University was actually giving scholarships to different students. So, I decided I'd like to apply one, and I get a little bit of help with the internationals program in my school, not as like, a huge help, but it might have a little bit have like clarifications and all that type of indications that they told me like, "Okay, you have to do this and this, complete this." Okay, like following the steps, trying to do everything correctly to not make it again, honestly.

Brissa Campos Toscano 01:41

Okay. And after being accepted, like after the admission process, how was the experience to apply for the visa?

Paula Ferradas Hiraoka 01:49

So, it was actually really complicated because this was like 2021, still with COVID. The process was really challenging, at least for me and my family, because the embassy in Peru was actually closed because of the circumstances we are. And a lot of people were traveling to the United States to get vaccinated. And also, the change of the government in Peru actually influenced it a lot, so the embassy didn't get a lot of visas. They were like, really restricted in that topic. And also, like, we had to schedule an appointment with them. And actually, like, my first appointment was for April of 2022, so it was way out of like, like, the time I was supposed to be here. So, I got a, like, emergency appointment for coming here, and thankfully, they gave it to me, and well, here I am.

Brissa Campos Toscano 03:11

And during this visa process, could you describe the relationship with the University? Like, how were they asking you, how was everything, like the which office?

Paula Ferradas Hiraoka 03:25

Okay, so actually, the Office of the International Students Program helped me a lot, like sending me what to do at that time, because honestly, I was freaking out. Like, it was so complicated for me and my family. The instructions were like, so messed up. So, the International Students Office helped me a lot. Also, the person in charge of me at the time who was Gerardo Salgado, helped me a lot because he seemed like, "Okay, you have to do this, this, complete this." And he was like, really patient, since I told you like, everything that happened in that day, for example, if he questioned me like, "hey, what how could you please like tell me an update about how the things are going with your I-20 and what your schedule," and I literally told him like, "Okay, I woke up, up and literally until until what I got in that time." So yeah, he was really patient. And also, like, the University was also like, really, patient really grateful, thank God because they were like, questioning me like, every five minutes like, "Hey, do you have your schedule?" or "hey, do you have something like that?" And yeah, and they also like sent me this recommendation card, recommendation letter. Yeah.

Brissa Campos Toscano 04:58

Oh, yeah.

Paula Ferradas Hiraoka 04:59

Yeah, when they, like, explain my situation to the embassy, and this actually, like helped me a lot to have my F-1 visa.

Brissa Campos Toscano 05:07

So, you did feel welcome in the University even before coming here?

Paula Ferradas Hiraoka 05:13

Yeah, around here was really open to everyone. They gave me like, a lot of opportunity, like, "Hey, you can do this or this," or like, "Hey, if this not happen, then maybe we can do this." Like they gave me a lot of options of what to do if something didn't work. So yeah, they were really open. I was really grateful for that.

Brissa Campos Toscano 05:34

And was this the admissions office, or was it the Center for International Programs? Like for admissions office, it will be Gerardo Salgado at that time, and for the Center of International Programs, it will be Miss Melissa Piedra at that time. So, who do you feel was the most helpful in that in that moment that you were like, with a lot of emotions?

Paula Ferradas Hiraoka 05:56

I think the office with Melissa

Brissa Campos Toscano 05:59

Piedra

Paula Ferradas Hiraoka 06:00

Piedra the Internationals Office because they were like, the most that sent me the emails of what to do, and Gerardo was just like asking me like, "Hey, how are you doing?" or "hey, we're thanks, you are doing all that." But actually, like, Melissa helped my father and I a lot because I was doing all the process when my father, and Melissa help us a lot of like, "Hey, you have to do this, and this, and this doesn't work then you have to try this." So it really like help us a lot with my father and I.

Brissa Campos Toscano 06:33

So, now we're talking before coming here, I would like to know in the present. So, right now we're already like finishing school, summing up. So, could you describe your experience with the University so far? To go more in depth? How has it changed from when you came here to from before like, applying and all the process, until you came here, has any type of relationship with the University changed better? It is stayed the same?

Paula Ferradas Hiraoka 07:03

Actually, like, when I was applying, I had like this expectations, like "yeah, this is gonna be like, good," or "this is gonna be like that and stuff like that." And now, being here now and in school, I realized that my relation with the University like grew up a lot. Now, even since day one, I feel like really welcome, and they like gave me these chances to grow up not only as a person but as a scholar also. Yeah, the University helped me a lot, also making these new friendships, and help in like, I made friendships with sophomores, juniors, seniors, not only because of my major, but also like, because of I'm part of the Marianist Leadership Program, the MLP. This helped me a lot like, "Hey, you have to do this or this" or, like, they offer me some opportunities to do some activities with them, so I feel really welcome to the University.

Brissa Campos Toscano 08:16

So, would you say that the relationship with the University is it still the same?

Paula Ferradas Hiraoka 08:21

I think it grew up better. Like, I had some expectations now that I'm here. I know that these expectations are way, way more than I imagined. So yeah, I'm happy.

Brissa Campos Toscano 08:37

That's good to know. So, my last question, it will be like a close up. And I want your honest opinion about it. So, after being a St. Mary's student for already, we could say a semester, completed a semester, what would you advise to the Center for International Programs to improve us as an international student at St. Mary's, what would you say could be better?

Paula Ferradas Hiraoka 09:03

I think the quality time, like, when I was like messaging to the Internationals Office, I usually, like, received their answer, like, one week later, so yeah, I had some problem with that. But like, because I knew that times aren't really easy right now with COVID, with all the changes that the Office has suffered, so I would like, I know like, what you guys experimented, but actually, like I really like want to congratulate them, I guess, because even with these hard times, they even made like a really good job. I expected a little bit more, but this is like what I receive, and I'm always like, be grateful for that.

Brissa Campos Toscano 10:01

Could you describe more what you mean by you wanted more?

Paula Ferradas Hiraoka 10:07

So like, talking about the time, like I expected, like, a little bit of less waiting time. Like, I was like not expecting like, okay, five minutes after that, hours of an email. No, like, but less than a week like maybe one, two days, maybe that can be a really good improvement.

Brissa Campos Toscano 10:30

Okay, and about the information you were given by the University, do you feel that it fulfilled your expectations?

Paula Ferradas Hiraoka 10:39

Yeah, what the University gave me about the all the information what I had to do, it was really was really good. It really completed my expectations.

Brissa Campos Toscano 10:52

Okay.

Paula Ferradas Hiraoka 10:53

So, every information they gave to me, it was really good, the organization was really good. And the what is it called? Like...

Brissa Campos Toscano 11:11

You can say in Spanish, and I can help you translate it.

Paula Ferradas Hiraoka 11:13

No. It's okay. But also like the, I guess, like also the time maybe like, influence it a little bit. Because there were, as I mentioned before, I knew like this information, or when they bring me like news about

what was gonna happen, or what I was supposed to do. Maybe that'll feel like it influence it maybe. I was expecting like one, two like, waiting days.

Brissa Campos Toscano 11:42

So, it will be time management, maybe even better...

Paula Ferradas Hiraoka 11:45

Maybe a little bit more time management, because like, all the information that send us like the office was really good. The quality of information was really good. But, I think they have to improve a little bit of the time management.

Brissa Campos Toscano 12:02

Yeah, that's good. So, my last question, this is the last one to close up, is what advice would you give, not for the Center of International Programs, but I would say maybe you as an international student, what would you say that could be improved for your experience to be more, more like happier, more fulfilling for you right now, as an international student in a new country, you have a lot of doubts and a lot of concerns that you but you also you have a lot of excitement, and you want to discover more. So, what would you say could improve to feel more welcome at the University?

Paula Ferradas Hiraoka 12:39

Wow, that's really tough question. I mean, like, I guess, for everyone, I feel like we have to learn a little bit of the cultures we have here. Coming to a new country, like the United States, they have different festivities, they had different things that I cannot relate to Peru. So, I guess my advice for everyone is just tell you a little bit like of the culture if you're coming here as an international student, but also, I guess, because there are a lot of like Mexican students here, also know a little bit more of the Mexican culture. For example, one experience I had is that I didn't knew what was the Day of the Dead, "dia de los muertos." I didn't knew what was a festivity and all that. So, when they explained me I was like, so shocked because we also like had this "feriado?"

Brissa Campos Toscano 13:43

Yes. Like it will be like a break day.

Paula Ferradas Hiraoka 13:45

Yeah, like a break day is true. But I really didn't know like about what was why we were celebrating. So, coming here and you'll like a lot of new festivities, new cultures, new persons also. So, we have to study a little bit of different cultures.

Brissa Campos Toscano 14:04

Yeah, well, I would really like to thank you for taking this time to talk to me. As you know you have any questions about this recording, you can always ask me I will send you the recording just to so you can check it out. There's any question you have or anything you would like to add? Please let me know. But I would like to thank you so much for this opportunity. And that's it. Thank you.

Paula Ferradas Hiraoka 14:27

Thank you for inviting me.